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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MAPUTO 001089

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MZ](#)  
SUBJECT: ELECTIONS ENVIRONMENT BECOMES INCREASINGLY  
DIFFICULT

REF: MAPUTO 1026

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Matthew Roth for reasons 1.4 (b + d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Two small opposition parties had far greater success than the Democratic Movement of Mozambique (MDM) in registering for the legislative elections. The parties, PLD and UDM, have drawn the attention of civil society and the independent media, who raise concerns that these parties may be either an effort by the ruling FRELIMO party to confuse voters on election day with acronyms and party emblems similar to the Democratic Movement of Mozambique (MDM), or to show the international community that opposition political parties can successfully compete in Mozambique. The Mozambican Embassy in Swaziland hosted a rally for FRELIMO recently, an offer which was not extended to other parties. Civil society groups which have challenged the GRM--or FRELIMO--have found themselves under increasing pressure. While there is no hard evidence to link these incidents to a grand scheme by FRELIMO to weaken opposition parties or civil society, they point to an environment in which critical voices are finding it increasingly difficult to speak out.  
END SUMMARY.

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TWO UNUSUALLY SUCCESSFUL OPPOSITION PARTIES  
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12. (C) After FRELIMO and RENAMO, the Party of Freedom and Development (PLD) is the political party registered to run in the most provinces for the legislative race on October 28. The National Elections Commission (CNE) qualified the PLD to stand in 10 out of 13 constituencies--more than twice as many as the popular Democratic Movement of Mozambique (MDM) led by Davis Simango. CNE officials regularly point to PLD in public statements as proof that GRM is not trying stop opposition parties, and have highlighted PLD's impressive organization skills. On September 21, poloffs visited PLD headquarters, housed in a small shack behind Maputo's beachfront. Upon entry, poloffs noticed two boxed-up computers (none were plugged in; the headquarters had no running electricity), and that only one room of the shack had any furnishings; the rest were empty. In the meeting, PLD President Caetano Sabile, a former FRELIMO combatant and longtime Ministry of Defense employee turned florist, indicated that the party had been officially formed in late June (ostensibly after the deadline for party registration), and had a membership of 10,000. Sabile could not produce for poloffs a campaign manifesto, party membership list, or give the names of most of the members of his party's Central Committee. On September 23, journalists from three different independent newspapers printed articles charging PLD with elections fraud, noting that PLD's party registration had never been published in any official government publication and therefore was technically illegal, and pointing out that the PLD's official symbol (helpful in identifying the party

to illiterate voters) was nearly identical to the MDM's rooster symbol, suggesting that the PLD was in fact a 'fake' created by interests related to FRELIMO to confuse voters.

13. (C) Another opposition party that successfully registered for legislative elections in several provinces is the Democratic Union of Mozambique (UDM), led by Jose Viana. In 2007 Viana headed a little-known NGO called LINK which declared itself as the lead representative for civil society to the CNE and nominated Leopoldo da Costa (rector of private university Higher Institute of Science and Technology - ISCTEM) to become the next CNE President. This nomination had been a surprise, as the CNE presidency was expected to go to a more well-known member of civil society, with independent weekly editor Salomao Moyana or the League of Human Rights (LDH) head, Dr. Alice Mabota considered frontrunners. In late September, press reports noted that the UDM party's initials are similar enough to MDM's to generate confusion, and questioned whether UDM's good showing in the legislative election registration was connected to Viana's relationship with CNE's da Costa.

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MOZAMBIKAN EMBASSY USED AS FRELIMO PLATFORM?  
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14. (C) Despite electoral law prohibiting the use of state resources for partisan purposes, the Mozambican Embassy in Swaziland posted a public notice inviting resident Mozambicans to attend FRELIMO's launch of its political campaign on September 13--on the Embassy's grounds. MDM officials told poloff on October 1 that they have not been

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offered the same opportunity by the embassy in Mbabane.

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CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS UNDER PRESSURE  
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15. (C) The nonprofit Center for Mozambican and International Studies (CEMO) presents public political debates on a wide variety of subjects. CEMO President Manuel de Araujo (also a former RENAMO MP and generally seen now as an MDM supporter), has said publicly that CEMO's request to be accredited as a domestic electoral observer was denied by the CNE without any explanation. He suggested that this move was retribution for his support to MDM.

16. (C) In early September, civil society group (and USG grantee) Youth Parliament (PJ), hosted a debate on the CNE decision to exclude opposition parties from the legislative race (reftel), which quickly turned into a harsh criticism of the CNE and GRM. On October 6, the head of the organization that had granted PJ office space on its premises asked PJ's leadership to vacate immediately because PJ "defends extremists and is against the government," and was jeopardizing the owner's nonprofit status. (Note: LDH has since offered PJ space on its premises. End Note.) On October 8, PJ President Salomao Muchanga told Emboff that FRELIMO members had threatened the mother of a member of the PJ, saying they would "deal with her son's future after the elections if he did not stop the work he was doing."

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COMMENT: AN INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT CLIMATE  
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17. (C) The surprising success in a short period of time of two small opposition parties without apparent popular support and without the organizational skills shown by MDM is of interest. The public accusations of fraud surrounding both small parties is worrisome, as is continued apparent GRM support of FRELIMO (as shown in the case of Mozambique's Embassy in Swaziland). Problems faced by civil society organizations might be related to internal disorganization,

but could reflect worsening relations with the GRM. In the end, there is no hard evidence to link these various incidents to a grand scheme by the GRM or FRELIMO party to weaken opposition parties or civil society, nonetheless, they point to an environment in which voices critical of FRELIMO are finding it increasingly difficult to speak out.

ROTH